**Name: Period:  
The least popular aren't the only targets in school bullying, study says**

By Los Angeles Times, adapted by Newsela

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Jonah Mowry made his now viral YouTube video for his small group of friends. He made the private video public in an effort to communicate to school bullies that he was finished being their victim.

**LOS ANGELES**—Scientists say that the more popular teens are, the more likely they are to be bullied. Only the king and queen of the prom are safe from [bullying](https://www.newsela.com/?tag=bullying).

Nearly a fifth of teens are bullied. Only the most popular kids at the very top of the high school social ladder avoid it. This may come as a surprise. Most people would think that the least popular kids were the only targets.

Scientists Robert Faris of the University of California at Davis and Diane Felmlee of Penn State University created the study. They found that older views of bullying don't tell the whole story. For most students, gains in popularity "increase the likelihood of victimization,” they wrote in the magazine of the American Sociological Association. As kids move up the social ladder, the victimization becomes more severe.

The bullies, too, often “possess strong social skills.” They may have tough lives at home and bully others to move up the social ladder, rather than re-create "their own troubled home lives.”

**Want Increased Importance**

Teens at the very top of the social ladder can “afford” to be nice. Yet, those in the next level down have to fight to keep themselves there, Faris said.

He and Felmlee looked at how being popular can increase the chances of becoming a victim. Their study explored the effects of being bullied. Bullied kids can suffer from feelings of sadness, increased worries and thoughts of killing themselves.

The scientists wrote that the ways in which popularity can increase the risk of being bullied "have been largely ignored" and that they have identified "a new pattern of victimization.” And it can work, they said. Evidence suggests that bullies' constant abuse is rewarded with increased clout and importance. They particularly gain more power when they target popular rivals.

Perhaps it shouldn’t be a surprise that popular kids get targeted. If the tormentor is aiming to move up the social ladder, targeting popular kids makes sense, the scientists wrote. And for the most popular victims, the fall can be more extreme.

To sort this out, the scientists used information from more than 8,000 students in 19 North Carolina schools. They asked them about their five closest friends, and five students who had “picked on or were mean” to them. Then they asked them about five kids they in turn had been mean to. They used that web of connections to draw their conclusions.

**Seeking Some Sort Of Shield**

In the group, about half the students were white and a third black. Most lived with two parents. Girls had higher rates of victimization. The researchers noted that there could be differences in other population groups.

Some students found protection; being friends with teens of the opposite gender provided some sort of shield.

The scientists don’t suggest that unpopular teens don’t get bullied. But their study found that theirs is not the whole story.

Faris also said that there was a message in the study for teenagers and their parents: It’s probably better to have a few close friends than 200 Facebook friends. In addition, the “drama” that’s often discussed about teenage relationships might be taken more seriously — by students and parents, he said.

And many students, Faris said, don’t see what’s happening “as bullying and they may be sort of like fish in water." They may be used to "having a lot of drama around them.”

**Please answer the questions in complete sentences.**

1. What do you predict this article will be about after **previewing** it?

2. What was the **main idea** of this article?

3. How does this article connect to The Outsiders? What similarities do these children have to the ones in the novel?

4. What is something surprising that you learned in the article that you may not have known before?

5. What is one question you still have about bullying?

(No, you may not say, “I don’t have any questions.”)